

## Muslim Integration and the European Union: A role for immigration restriction

Although it arose from a purely economic pact, the European Union today is anything but. Throughout the 1990s, policies arose regulating everything from human rights to drug trafficking. As nations have grown closer, increased cooperation has resulted in open borders and the recent adoption of a shared currency. These factors, combined with the proximity of European nations, have resulted in nearly unencumbered immigration, with enormous numbers of Muslims entering the EU from Northern Africa, as well as large internal migrations. Today, the growing number of Muslim immigrants in the European Union poses unique and largely unforeseen problems, from a strain on social services to Islamophobia and social unrest. A lack of unified immigration policy in the EU has worsened these problems, as disparate and contradictory policies have arisen among nations. To protect national identities and promote stable economies, the EU needs to act soon to standardize immigration practices and implement selective immigration policies.

### Isolation and Exclusion

Muslim immigrants in the European Union today are broadly discriminated against. Both de jure and de facto discrimination exist, impacting civil rights, job availability, housing, and religious practice. Over the last few years, external pressures have forced Muslim communities in the EU to become closely knit, branching off from mainstream European society as they form “states within a state.”<sup>1</sup> This status quo of discrimination arose from three separate concerns about Muslim immigration that converged on September 11th: pervasive Islamic extremism, Muslim cultural differences, and economic implications.

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<sup>1</sup> Staff Writer. “The war of the headscarves,” The Economist, February 4, 2004.

### *Rise of Extremism*

Unlike the United States where much Muslim discrimination has only clearly arisen post September 11<sup>th</sup>, Europe has seen long-term Islamic discrimination. After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the 1980 hostage taking at the Iranian Embassy in London thrust Middle Eastern affairs into the public eye. Following years of public debates over the role of Muslim faith in Europe, extremist terrorism arose in the 1990s, starting with the 1994 attempt to crash Air France Flight 8969 into the Eiffel Tower. Then, in 1995, a series of bombs were detonated in France, aimed at damaging public transportation systems. More recently, Muslim extremists were responsible for the 2004 Madrid train bombings, the July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005 bombings of the London Underground, and have been implicated in the airline liquid explosives plot earlier this year. Europe has typically been burdened by more terrorism than the United States as a result of internal factions, such as the Spanish group ETA and the IRA from Northern Ireland. Extremist terrorism, however, poses a vastly different threat to the EU. Both ETA and the IRA typically target government symbols, commonly warning the police before bombings. Islamic terrorism, however, is much broader – targeting civilians and aimed at cause chaos. As a result, the European Union has become fearful and arguably irrationally paranoid regarding Islamic terrorism.

Terrorism does pose a clear danger to the EU, but member states have issued far reaching edicts that are more likely to anger Muslims and promote extremism than increase security. While the EU as a whole only has limited laws regarding terrorism - addressing the sharing of intelligence data and passport security - most member nations have drafted their own restrictive mandates.<sup>2</sup> The United Kingdom, for example, passed the ‘Terrorism Acts,’ increasing police powers, such as legalizing detention without justification for up to 28 days.<sup>3</sup> A series of botched police actions under these laws have sparked outrage among Muslim communities. London has had the most visible police failures, which many blame on a free association of Middle-Eastern men with terrorism, as the Islamic Human Rights Commission describes:

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<sup>2</sup> Cohn, Marjorie. “SPAIN, EU AND US: WAR OR TERROR OR WAR ON LIBERTIES?,” The Jurist, March 16, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Staff Writer. “Government’s terror bill passed,” BBC News, March 11, 2005.

“The increasing persecution of the Muslim community in Britain, both foreign nationals and third generation Britons, is an alarming sign of the level of institutional Islamophobia in Britain today. Both Burma and Zimbabwe justify their draconian laws and persecution of minorities due to “internal security issues” or a “terror threat”. Britain today uses the very same justifications for its abuses of basic human rights. Britain today is speaking the language of repression and behaving as a tyrant state.”<sup>4</sup>

The Muslim Council of Britain attributes these failures to intelligence problems and warns of strained Muslim relations, arguing:

“The intelligence has to be tested seriously... Because if the intelligence is flawed and operations are carried out...that creates difficulties in the community relationship.”<sup>5</sup>

Such an inability to thoroughly vet intelligence has publicly troubled Britain for the last few years. In October of 2004, it was revealed that seventeen people had been held in London’s Belmarsh Prison for three years without any charges, drawing analogies to Guantanamo Bay.<sup>6</sup> The majority of these detainees were from Arab countries. Six of the detained people were later let go without charges, as they had been falsely imprisoned. Another six were later release on bail, and it is unclear if they will ever be prosecuted.<sup>7</sup> Some interpreted their bailed release as a public relations stunt, since dropping charges against them could be interpreted as a British intelligence failure. In April of 2005, British police shot and killed Azelle Rodney, an unarmed man of Middle-Eastern complexion, after operating on incorrect intelligence. No police were prosecuted after the killing, which sparked minor protests in Muslim communities.<sup>8</sup> Later, in July of 2005, the British police held down Jean Charles de Menezes and shot him five times in the head. Menezes was an unarmed Brazilian electrician who was mistaken for a suicide bomber on the day after the London Underground bombings. Once again, the police involved were cleared of any wrongdoing, as they acted under a new British ‘shoot-to-

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<sup>4</sup> Policy Briefing, “Britain: An Outpost of Tyranny,” Islamic Human Rights Commission, February 4, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Staff Writer, “Questions over London Terror Raid,” BBC News, June 10, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Winterman, Denise. “Belmarsh - Britain's Guantanamo Bay?,” BBC News, October 6, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Naughton, Philippe. “Judge grants bail to Belmarsh terror detainees,” The Times, March 10, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Barkham, Patrick. “Shot Six Times by British Police: Why has nobody heard of Azelle Rodney?,” The Guardian, December 7, 2006.

kill' doctrine regarding suspected suicide bombers.<sup>9</sup> Abdulhaq Addae, the spokesman for a Britain mosque, described resulting community tension:

“There is a case for shoot-to-kill if it will stop nutcases blowing up innocent people, but the police have got to have more concrete evidence that the suspect is a suicide bomber before they start firing bullets into someone's head.”<sup>10</sup>

Despite these failures, little has been done to improve British intelligence. In mid-2006, British police again acted on vague information, raiding a house in Forest Gate, London and shooting an innocent man in the shoulder.<sup>11</sup> Later that year, nearly 100 British police surrounded Jameah Islameah, an Islamic high school, and uncovered nothing after intrusively searching for explosives for 24 days.<sup>12</sup>

While counter-terrorist operations are important to regional stability, the European Union needs to be careful in exercising their police powers. Overly hostile actions will surely alienate Muslims from the European community. Although the hijackers on September 11<sup>th</sup> were from Arab nations, the London Underground attackers were born in Britain.<sup>13</sup> The suspects in the 2006 plot to destroy airlines with liquid explosives were also ‘home grown’ terrorists. Out of 25 suspects in the airline plot, the overwhelming majority were Muslim extremists from Britain. However, even in that case, which was described as a great intelligence success, eight of the 25 suspects were recently released without charges. The EU has a clear need to establish regional guidelines for police use of force while increasing intelligence sharing between nations.

### *Housing Disparities*

Although terrorism enforcement may illustrate the most egregious alienations of Muslims, a long history of cultural differences offers insight into the current state of discrimination. Islamic radicals have arisen from years of separation and persecution, an

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<sup>9</sup> Staff Writer. “Police chief 'sorry' over death,” BBC News, July 24, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Harrison, David and Chris Johnston. “Muslims back 'shoot to kill' despite an innocent man's death,” The Telegraph, July 23, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Press Release. “IPCC to Investigate Forest Gate Firearms Incident,” Independent Police Complaints Commission, June 2, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Staff Writer. “No arrests at UK Islamic school after police search,” The Irish Examiner, September 2, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Storobin, David. “UK Spy Identifies Groups and People Behind London Bombings,” Global Politician, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

issue that is pronounced in France, and threatens to spread throughout the European Union if left unchecked.

A clear Muslim migration began in early 20<sup>th</sup> century France and expanded in the decades after World War II, when Paris lacked reconstruction workers and turned to North African Muslims. These first generation Muslims, although not actively discriminated against, were alienated from the French population by choice, choosing to live together in Muslim communities.<sup>14</sup> Then, in 1962, nearly 1 million immigrants from Algeria entered France after the Algerian War of Independence. Many of these migrants encountered racism in France and were publicly referred to as “black feet,” since the migrants feet were sometimes stained from coal on the ships used for their transportation to France.<sup>15</sup> Although their loyalties generally remained to their home nations, few migrants left France, choosing instead to send money back home. This permanent migration led to a housing shock in France and the construction of the French HLM – housing projects that today serve over 20% of France’s population.<sup>16</sup> Although the HLM system was originally designed to spread housing projects evenly over France, all but the poorest communities (who needed construction jobs), opposed their development. Thus, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, housing projects served to concentrate the poor and form French ghettos. Today, there exists a substantial Muslim immigrant population that is localized in the largely impoverished French housing projects.

The disconnected grouping of French Muslims makes their integration into European society extremely difficult. While the rise of Islamic extremism should make cultural integration of utmost importance, many residents of the French HLM describe the opposite – institutionalized opposition to Arab movement and the tendency of immigrants to get “stuck” in housing projects. Following September 11<sup>th</sup>, Muslim discrimination skyrocketed and to this day, employers across the EU are reluctant to hire Arabs. Although race-based discrimination is illegal in France, businesses, especially those in retail, are rarely prosecuted. Many even acknowledge their discrimination and justify it by saying, “to be responsible for marketing you must have roots in mainland

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<sup>14</sup> Crumley, Bruce. “Fighting Terrorism: Lessons from France,” Time Magazine, September 24, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Staff Writer. “The Second May 13” Time Magazine, May 25, 1959.

<sup>16</sup> Ryan, Yasmine. “Why Marseille is Different,” Scoop Independent, November 12, 2006.

France over several generations to understand the French consumer attitudes.”<sup>17</sup> Landlords are also less likely to rent space to Muslims, increasing the concentration of Muslims in poor housing projects and making them outsiders within their own nation. Many attribute housing discrimination to security fears. Ironically, however, this discrimination likely leads to increased risks of terrorism, with “frustration among [those] of African and Arab descent” arising from separatist policies.<sup>18</sup> Finally, additional enforcement of immigration laws exacerbated these problems of racism. Although France has long standing laws that restrict undocumented immigrant employment, they were rarely enforced until fears of terrorism arose, combined with pressure from the United States. French police were even granted the authority to demand proof of citizenship from anyone walking on the street and a broadly reaching power to deport immigrants. Combined, these measures have nearly destroyed the immigrant way of life in France. Today, the HLM districts have an unemployment rate of 19.6% (20 year-olds face more than 30% unemployment) and income at 75% less than the national average.<sup>19</sup> This economic despair has driven crime and social unrest, with little response from the French government. As a result, in the fall of 2005, large riots broke out in towns surrounding housing projects. The riots were sparked by two Arab immigrant teenagers, both residents of a poor Paris housing project, who were running from police that were attempting to check their IDs. The teens ran into an electrical substation to hide and were both killed. In the weeks that followed, youths rioted throughout France, burning nearly 9,000 cars and causing an estimated \$250 million USD in damage. Nearly all of the rioters were poor immigrants living in French housing projects.

### *Culture Shock*

Although the problems associated with French housing may seem retrospectively clear, France has struggled with their options. Although the French have the option of promoting integration by enforcing non-discrimination laws, a strong movement in France exists in favor of preserving traditional French culture and values. Some recent

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<sup>17</sup> Staff Writer. “French Muslims face job discrimination,” [BBC World News](#), November 2, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Bohlen, Celestine. “France Struggles to Help Immigrants Without Sacrificing Ideals,” [Bloomberg](#), December 5, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Valentine, Vikki. “Economic Despair, Racism Drive French Riots,” [NPR](#), November 8, 2005.

attempts to diversify French housing and employment have resulted in violence from non-Muslim citizens, such as four French men who were recently convicted of burning Islamic religious sites. After their conviction, the men expressed how they desired to “save French culture” from “[an] invasion of foreigners.”<sup>20</sup> Many French political parties, such as the National Front, advocate severe immigration restrictions and protection of French culture. France’s pro-immigration groups lack political capital, and Islamic political parties are all but non-existent, leaving xenophobic policy makers without opposition.<sup>21</sup> As a result, in 2004, France took the unfortunate step of banning Islamic religious symbols. Historically, France has followed the ideas of *laïcité*, which is effectively a pro-atheist standpoint. Unlike the secularism that many national governments follow, the French discourage any personal displays of religion; a policy viewed by some as fomenting a “plague of separatism” that is specific to Islam.<sup>22</sup> Extremely secular policy has had a significant impact on Islamic residents of France, specifically after the March, 2004 law that bans any conspicuous display of religion in public schools. This law has been interpreted to prohibit the Koran’s requirement of wearing hijab (coverings), which include head scarves worn by Muslim women, while allowing the display of small Christian crosses and Jewish Stars of David. Despite protests by French Muslims, the United States, and the European Convention on Human Rights, the law remains in effect today. As a result, a number of Muslim students have left French public schooling, choosing to be educated at home or in religious schools and further isolating themselves from French society. Although this French policy has been criticized internally and externally, the French ban on head scarves is overwhelmingly supported by French citizens.

### *Growing Problems*

Police abuses, housing disparities, and the fear of culture shock are problems facing the entire European Union. While Great Britain has experienced the danger of broad police powers, housing problems have risen in Britain. Just this month, the UK housing board

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<sup>20</sup> Staff Writer, “Attackers of mosques in France receive 3 to 5 years in jail,” Deutsche Presse-Agentur, December 8, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Burton, James. “The struggle for a united kingdom,” The Sydney Morning Herald, December 9, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Staff Writer. “Ghettos shackle French Muslims,” BBC News, October 31, 2005.

warned that “properties are often overcrowded, the migrant workers have little choice of location or condition of property, the rents are usually high and there are often no tenancy agreements stating the length of the tenancy or giving any responsibilities.”<sup>23</sup> In France, where housing problems are at a breaking point, police powers have been growing following the 2005 urban riots. Other nations across Europe are experiencing similar problems, notably Spain, which is dealing with an increase in Moroccan immigrants. A growing body of evidence supports the idea that isolated immigrants are becoming extremist. A clear policy promoting diversity and integration across the EU is needed if Islamist violence is to be stopped.

### Selective Immigration

The difficulties facing immigrants in the EU have increased substantially following September 11<sup>th</sup>. Although pressure from the US to increase border control was intended to quell the problems of immigration, most policies seem to have had the opposite effect. The EU must now act to implement a selective immigration policy that: consolidates national immigration policies into an EU-wide doctrine, defines short term limits on immigration to the EU, and outlines the rights and services that are extended to all EU members. The clearest concrete policy to attain these goals is offered by Nicolas Sarkozy, the French Interior Minister. Sarkozy urgently advocates “a treaty on international migration,” which would include unified rights of workers, selective immigration based on education and job opportunities, and a plan to improve poor African nations where many migrants come from.<sup>24</sup>

### *Standard Policies*

Standardizing immigration policies will ease the problem of ‘nation shopping’ – a process in which immigrants pick and choose EU member states based on their ability to immigrate for as a worker or in seeking asylum. In practice, the proximity of European borders and new EU-wide worker regulations means that any one nation with limitless

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<sup>23</sup> Staff Writer. “Need to address migrant housing,” Spalding Today, December 11, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Staff Writer. “France's Sarkozy calls for creation of international treaty on migration,” The International Herald Tribune, December 11, 2006.



immigration can impact all other nations. This has been seen in the recent Spanish migrations, where workers have flocked from North Africa to Spain, and then outwards to higher-paying EU nations. Only in the past month has the European Union addressed their southern borders, forming a 25 nation coalition to secure the Mediterranean. It remains to be seen whether this coalition, which calls for purely police force to keep out migrants, will improve conditions.<sup>25</sup> A clear need still exists for unified policy regarding immigration and asylum declaration in the European Union. Some nations, such as Germany, have become exceptionally restrictive in terms of granting asylum, while others, such as Great Britain, remain open. Recently, Germany has been accused of directly causing the deaths of asylum seekers by forcing them back to hostile home nations. Although a new human rights agency was formed to investigate such claims,<sup>26</sup> the only clear solution is a unified immigration policy. A centralized doctrine would also help prevent terrorism by promoting a transparent system for immigration, rather than the current fragmented state.

### *Immigration Limits*

Europe must establish two limits on immigration: an internal limit that restricts job flow, and an external limit that only allows needed workers to enter the EU.

Internally, the clearest need for policy reform is due to vast economic disparities within EU member states. The EU faces, however, a much more peculiar economic problem than other nations. Globally, much mass immigration involves poorly educated workers seeking low paying jobs. Between the US and Mexico, for example, immigrants average 4-5 years less education than their American counterparts<sup>27</sup>. In the European Union, however, recent problems of internal migration stem from differences in job opportunities, rather than purely wage-driven concerns. As Muslims are denied job opportunities, their positions appear to be filled by Polish workers. In Great Britain alone, out of 447,000 migrant worker applications from 2004-2006, 62% were Polish,

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<sup>25</sup> Staff Writer. "EU ministers back plans to curb migration flows," DPA German Press Agency, December 5, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Staff Writer. "EU justice ministers reach provisional deal on new human rights agency," The International Herald Tribune, December 4, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, James P., and Barry Edmonston. The New Americas : Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1997.

many of whom have similar educational backgrounds to British citizens.<sup>28</sup> As a result, Poland is desperate for workers, a situation which can best be described as resulting from ‘a mismatch between jobs and workers.’<sup>29</sup> With a boom in service workers and few employers, Polish service workers are quickly flocking to other member states, leaving Poland critically short of workers. By some estimates, the Polish economy could easily accommodate an additional 150,000 workers.<sup>30</sup> This problem has hampered Turkish entrance into the EU and complicated relations with Baltic States, where this problem persists. In the last months, however, a solution has been proposed that would grant temporary worker status to Polish citizens and increase enforcement of non-discrimination laws. After a few years, or the end of an employment contract, Polish workers would have to return to Poland. This solution should be adopted on a wider scale in the European Union in targeted economies that face the clearest difficulties. Widespread adoption would encourage employers to hire Muslims and would decrease internal economic disparities.

Internal restriction may be an easy task, however, compared to the difficulty of restricting external migration. Europe cannot afford to simply close their borders, as some extremist candidates are advocating, due to declining birth rates across the EU and an aging population. The UN estimates that by 2050, the population of Europe will actually decrease by 10%, with analysts asserting that “migration is really going to be necessary...to maintain a normal population level in Europe.”<sup>31</sup> There is currently only one policy being legitimately considered for adoption across states – a quota-based immigration system. States would establish caps on the number of workers they wish to allow in, specifying educational background and prohibiting the entrance of lesser-educated migrants. Recent political developments suggest that such a policy will soon be enacted, with African countries in favor of restrictions. Countries such as Libya experience the worst problems, as migrants travel through Libya to reach Europe. “We have an estimated 2.0 million illegal migrants living in the midst of about five million

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<sup>28</sup> Great Britain. Home Office. Department for Work and Pensions *Accession Monitoring Report, May 2004-June 2006*. Published August 22, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Dempsey, Judy. “Polish Labor Is Scarce as Workers Go West.” *The New York Times* November 19, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Lucas, Ryan. “Poland wrestles with manual labor shortage as workers head west.” *Associated Press*, November 30, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Staff Writer. “Immigration fails to stem European population loss,” *Associated Press*, August 17, 2006.

people. That illegal migrant presence is a threat to our social fabric and a cause of rising crime and diseases,” described the Libyan Foreign Minister.<sup>32</sup> The EU must be careful, however, to avoid ‘brain drain’ problems that have plagued immigration elsewhere. By selecting only well-educated immigrants, Europe is likely to stifle the growth of African nations unless workers are required to return after a few years of employment. Such a system would be beneficial to both Africa and the EU, since the EU would gain needed employment, while Africa would eventually have more experienced workers. European states must promote such a system where “programmes...foster mobility and temporary return of members of the diasporas with the necessary skills in their countries of origin, in order to contribute to capacity building.”<sup>33</sup> The EU should also resume talks on an African development fund that calls for a large African investment campaign.<sup>34</sup>

### *The Future*

A unified policy will help EU member states prevent internal migrations while easing the transition of Muslims into the European community. In weighing their policy options, however, Europe must be mindful of cultural identities and must balance complete restriction with open borders. In trying to prevent terrorism, Europe must be reminded of the difference between integration and assimilation. Britain is already on the brink of assimilation – according to the European Commission for Racial Equality – despite historic warnings from the Home Office that immigration policy should not result in “a flattening process of assimilation,” but rather “equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity.”<sup>35</sup> Tony Blair was recently criticized following his failed advocacy for outlawing head scarves, warning that Islam distorted British values and “has thrown into sharp relief the nature of what we have called, with approval, multicultural Britain.”<sup>36</sup> France, too, has wrongly chosen assimilation over integration in their ban on head scarves. Nations must realize that in the struggle to protect their own cultural identities and national security, the cultural identities of migrant groups must also be respected.

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<sup>32</sup> Sarrar, Salah. “EU, Africa seek ways to cut illegal migration,” Reuters, November 22, 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Staff Writer. “EU, Africa talk migration and brain drain,” EurActiv, November 26, 2006.

<sup>34</sup> Staff Writer. “EU backs away from migration fund,” BBC News, November 23, 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Cowell, Alan. “Islamic Schools Test Ideal of Integration in Britain,” The New York Times, October 15, 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Stringer, David. “Blair sees immigrant duty to accept British values,” Associated Press, December 9, 2006.